

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Bunkong Tuon: Two Poems

Bunkong Tuon · Wednesday, June 10th, 2020

Who is this Child?

Who sashays across
the grocery aisle?
Who makes a beeline
for the sunglasses rack
and tries on every shade
posing for the store camera?
Who shakes her little bum-bum
when a Katy Perry song
comes on the radio?
Who smiles and talks to strangers
like they are old friends?
When the leg of a chair
is loose,
this child carries her pink box
of pretend tools, gets on her back,
rolls under the chair, and proceeds
to tighten a screw.
Chanda, where did you come from?
Why did you choose for parents
blind mice when it comes to adulting?
It matters none, the reasons
we are gifted with you.
You can winterize the lawnmower,
summerize the snowblower,
fix our leaking faucet,
schmooze with college deans
at holiday parties,
and please please please
do our taxes!

*

Chanda, The Liar

The lying comes naturally
nowadays like it's her ABC's.
She does it straight to our faces.
Says her lips are bruised when she wants
a popsicle from the freezer
or that she has a tummy ache
when she doesn't want to sleep.
Just the other day she lied
when we drove past a McDonald's.
Said she needed to go potty.
We made a U-turn, parked, got in.
There was no pee but she made out
with a Happy Meal that included
a plastic polar bear. I said,
"We've been duped by fake poop."
When we got home my wife
and I surfed the net. "Lying
is one of the seven detestable sins,"
said an Internet preacher.
Reading a child psychology website
my wife told me, "Lying is a sign
of intelligence. She now knows
the world is made of self and others.
It's a kind of survival skill."
I thought back to the stories
my grandmother told of an uncle
who was taken away by the Khmer
Rouge because he spoke the truth:
he had studied medicine.
Something that heals was transformed
by truth into something that killed.
The next day Chanda came
running through the door,
her arms stretching to the sky,
and said, "Daddy, Daddy!
Somebody hurt me!"
My wife shook her head
to let me know it was another lie.
But I hugged our daughter anyway,
gave her a big squeeze,
never wanted to let her go.

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